

open

No. 4
Fall/Winter 2011

A magazine for the Athabasca University community

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helps discover
Earth's first known
Trojan asteroid



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(ARC)



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Dempsey Bob
2011 honorary
doctorate
recipient



Artist, visionary and
community leader

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About *Open* magazine

Open magazine is Athabasca University's magazine for the university community: our students, our alumni, and our partners, staff and friends. If you're thinking about studying with AU, *Open* is a great way to get to know us and learn about our achievements, projects, research, events and the people who make it all happen: our outstanding students, alumni, faculty and staff.

Open magazine is published twice a year.

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About Athabasca University

Athabasca University (AU) is Canada's Open University, a worldwide leader in online and distance education based in Athabasca, Alberta. We're proud to serve more than 38,000 students in 90 countries with courses and programs in the arts, business, health disciplines, social sciences, sciences and technology.

As an open university, we strive to help people overcome the challenges that can prevent them from attending traditional university—challenges like family and job responsibilities and not being able to relocate to go to school. Our open admission policy allows anyone 16 or older to study with us as an undergraduate student regardless of their educational history.

Check out *Open AU* online

Keep up with the latest AU news all year round with *Open AU*, the online companion to *Open* magazine: www.open-au.com



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Open

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FROM THE EDITOR

The rewards of commitment



Photo: Jillian Anderson
Erin Ottosen

To discover the Earth's first known Trojan asteroid, Athabasca University professor Dr. Martin Connors searched the skies for 20 years with no certain payoff, looking for something that might not even exist.

To become an acclaimed artist recognized around the world, sculptor and AU honorary doctorate recipient Dempsey Bob practised, practised and practised, even after he was told in school that he was no good. And he says he'll be perfecting his craft for the rest of his life.

Commitment is a taskmaster, and the tasks are endless. There's always a certain amount of faith involved, and sometimes you never really know if what you're committing to will pay off. But, as Connors and Bob have found, if you commit to a goal, a dream, the results of your dedication and passion can be bigger than anything you hoped for or imagined. And so it is with Athabasca University. Our 41-year commitment to open distance education has culminated in what was truly a banner year for the university.

Since the last issue of *Open* magazine was published in fall 2010, we've opened Canada's first online architectural program. We've completed over 30 information and communication technology projects that strengthen our Open Knowledge Environment. We've been awarded another Canada Research Chair and a UNESCO/Commonwealth of Learning Chair in Open Educational Resources, and we won awards that recognize our excellence in marketing, assessing prior learning and exporting education around the world. And at our main campus in Athabasca, we finished building our \$30-million Academic and Research Centre (ARC).

All of these successes are thanks to the AU community, of course, and in these pages we're pleased to introduce you to some of our extraordinary faculty, alumni and students and the goals and dreams to which they are committed. We hope that their stories and the story of AU inspire you to commit to your own dreams and goals. They're more reachable than you might think.

—Erin Ottosen, Editor

open book

from AU Press

AU Press, the open access scholarly publishing house at Athabasca University, had another exciting year of awards, events, conferences, and of course, new books.

Upcoming titles

In the fall of 2011, AU Press published another 10 titles.

The lavishly illustrated *Working People in Alberta* was edited by AU history professor Dr. Alvin Finkel.

A portrait of pioneer life and a window onto the French experience in Canada, *Man Proposes, God Disposes* is an irresistible story and the memoir of a French immigrant who settled in Athabasca before the First World War.

Also of note this fall was the release of the selected writings of "Dr. Joe" Couture, *A Metaphoric Mind*.

Couture stood at the centre of some of the greatest political, social, and intellectual struggles of Aboriginal Peoples in contemporary Canada. This volume brings together his key works for the very first time.

Downloading and purchasing AU Press books

All AU Press books may be downloaded for free; they may also be purchased in paperback and hardcover. Visit our website for more information: www.aupress.ca

Stay in touch with AU Press

To find out about upcoming events and publications, look for AU Press on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.



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Winner of the 2010 Alberta Readers' Choice Award



**Letters from the Lost:
A Memoir of Discovery**

Helen Waldstein Wilkes

This \$10,000 provincial prize is awarded annually to the author of a work of adult fiction or narrative non-fiction published in Alberta.

Winner of the 2010 Edna Staebler Award for Creative Non-fiction



**A Very Capable Life:
The Autobiography of
Zarah Petri**

John Leigh Walters

This national award, valued at \$10,000, is given to a Canadian writer's first or second published book.

Winner of the 2011 Charles A. Wedemeyer Award



**Accessible Elements: Teaching
Science Online and at a Distance**

*Dietmar Kennepohl
and Lawton Shaw*

For the third year in a row, an AU Press book has won the Wedemeyer award for best publication in the field of distance education.

notable news



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

George Siemens

Educational technology award for George Siemens

In August 2010, George Siemens of Athabasca University's Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute (TEKRI) received an Award of Excellence from the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE) for his exemplary leadership in educational technology.

AU recognized for excellence in prior learning assessment

Athabasca University received a Canadian Recognizing Learning Award from the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) in November 2010. The award recognizes AU's achievements in prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), a process that allows students to earn university credits for learning they've done at work and in other arenas outside formal post-secondary education.

Since AU began practising PLAR in 1997, the university has become recognized as a leader in the field. AU is one of just a handful of Canadian universities that has an office dedicated to PLAR, and AU is perhaps the only Canadian university where assessment of prior learning is enshrined in policy and practised across the entire institution.



Dr. Ross Paul

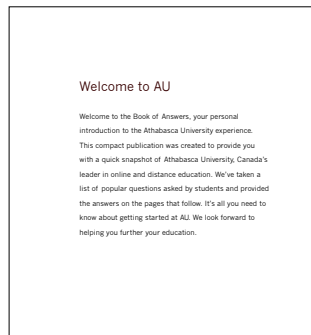
Order of Canada for Dr. Ross Paul

A former acting president of Athabasca University, Dr. Ross Paul, was appointed a member of the Order of Canada in November 2010 for his contributions to open learning and distance education. Paul spent 10 years at AU as vice-president, academic, and one year as acting president before he became of the president of Laurentian University in 1991.

Awards for AU marketing materials

In February 2011, AU's 2010 national advertising campaign received a bronze medal from the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada District (District VIII) of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

This was the second major award received by AU's Marketing and Communication unit in 2010-11. In December 2010, AU's *Viewbook* and *Book of Answers*, publications for prospective students, won the 2010 Association of Commonwealth Universities' award for student publications.



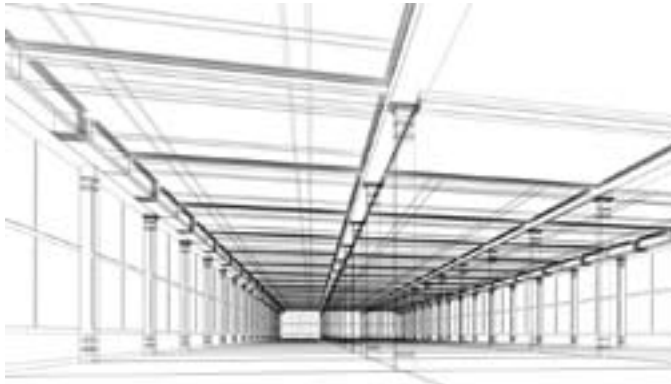


Photo: Blaise MacMullin

AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek and RAIC president Stuart Howard

Canada's first online architectural program

Athabasca University and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) are proud to offer Canada's first university-level architectural program that combines the flexibility of distance learning with a working environment.

In February 2011, AU and RAIC celebrated the Government of Alberta's approval of the program, a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Architecture offered through the RAIC Centre for Architecture at AU. The diploma, which has since opened to students, serves the educational needs of aspiring Canadian architects who are unable to attend one of Canada's

schools of architecture as well as international architectural graduates who come to Canada and find themselves in need of additional courses.

"We are very pleased to see this program offered through Athabasca University," said RAIC president Stuart Howard. "It will soon provide students across Canada with a path into the profession of architecture based on a unique work-study program that includes employment experience in the office of an architect."

AU wins Export Award of Distinction

In March 2011, Athabasca University was recognized by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce for achievements in exporting knowledge and education around the world. The Export Award of Distinction is given to an Alberta organization with outstanding accomplishments in exporting products or services outside of Canada. Some of AU's export achievements include the following:

- AU students are in 90 countries.
- AU was the first Canadian university to be accredited in the U.S. and in 2010 was accredited in the European Union.
- AU is assisting Nepal with starting a Nepali open university.

CAF digitization projects completed

March 31, 2011, marked the conclusion of several projects that developed multimedia learning resources for courses and converted a variety of Athabasca University materials into a consistent online format. A total of \$6.4 million was made available for these projects through the Community Adjustment Fund (CAF) and internal sources. CAF is part of Canada's Economic Action Plan, a federal government initiative.

Highlights of CAF project results

- Interactive learning resources were created for some of AU's highest-registration courses.
- Over 500 courses were converted to a consistent XML format.
- Almost 4,000 webpages for the academic centres, the online calendar and course syllabi were converted to new web templates.
- More than 90 jobs were created in Athabasca, Grande Prairie, St. Paul and Edmonton.



U.S. accreditation reaffirmed and AU commended

Athabasca University's U.S. accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) was reaffirmed in March 2011. The reaffirmation process included a comprehensive self-study in which the AU community and the MSCHE evaluation team examined the entire scope of what we do as a university and how well we do it.

AU successes

The MSCHE evaluation team commended the university's successes in several areas, the highlights of which are below:

- A mission (removing barriers to higher learning) that inspires passion in AU's stakeholders.
- A culture of student support in which staff take a personalized, proactive approach to helping students.
- Leadership in distance learning best practices.
- A focus on diversity, Indigenous studies and global perspectives throughout AU's curriculum.
- Integration of information literacy throughout the curriculum.
- Significant growth in the university's research endeavours.
- Innovative work by AU's Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute (TEKRI) in mobile learning, social media, and personalized and adaptive knowledge.
- The open publication and dissemination of scholarly work through AU Press (see page 2), which makes its materials freely available online.



Photo: Jillian Anderson

Main campus renovated; science lab doubles in size

The new Academic and Research Centre (ARC; see page 14) is just one of many recent physical improvements to Athabasca University's main campus in Athabasca. The science laboratory, which is used by faculty and students who come to do lab work in person, was doubled in size and fully renovated. 2011 also saw upgrades to the main and library entrances of the main campus building as well as a complete rejuvenation of its roof and skylights.

The renovations to the main campus (excluding the ARC building) were funded by \$8.45 million from the Government of Canada's Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP) and internal sources.

New Strategic University Plan for 2011-16

This fall, Athabasca University finalized its Strategic University Plan (SUP) for 2011-16. The plan is a collaboratively created community document that outlines how AU will lead quality open distance education into 2016 and beyond. It identifies where the university is now and guides the decisions the university will make over the next five years. As AU continues to grow, the SUP renews our shared direction and sense of purpose.



Photo: Jason Chamberlain, Athabasca Advocate

AU rallies to help Slave Lake neighbours

Athabasca University staff members were some of the first to respond when over 1,800 evacuees from Slave Lake began to arrive in Athabasca late on the night of May 15, 2011.

As high winds pushed a raging wildfire straight into the town of Slave Lake, residents had just minutes to get themselves out of harm's way. Over the next two weeks, many of them stayed at the evacuation centre at the Athabasca Regional Multiplex just across the road from AU's main campus.

Over 100 AU staff volunteered at the evacuation centre, helping with everything from reception and registration to food prep. "People just wanted to know how they could help and where they should go," said Butch Brennan, AU's emergency response coordinator and director of risk management.

"I was really moved by people's strength in the face of such hardship and loss," said Rhonda Guay, counselling services coordinator at AU and one of the volunteers. "People really rose to the occasion, both evacuees and volunteers. I was honoured to help and to share what they were going through."

Overall, the evacuees received an incredible outpouring of support from the community of Athabasca and from around the province, Brennan said. Athabasca is 115 kilometres south of Slave Lake.

Projects strengthen AU's Open Knowledge Environment

Athabasca University's two-year, \$7.65-million Open Knowledge Environment projects were completed this fall.

These projects were funded by the Government of Canada's Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP), the Government of Alberta and internal sources.

Over 30 KIP projects supporting AU's Open Knowledge Environment were completed. They have increased the momentum to reinvent AU by greatly increasing information and communication technology capacity and currency in research and collaboration, learning and content management systems, and student support.

AU president to head Canadian Association of Learned Journals

Athabasca University president Dr. Frits Pannekoek was acclaimed president-elect of the Canadian Association of Learned Journals (CALJ) in May 2011. Pannekoek serves as president-elect for one year before assuming the association's presidency for two years.

"We are delighted that Dr. Pannekoek has agreed to serve with CALJ at this time of rapid and substantial change in the scholarly journals publishing arena," said CALJ executive director Dr. Ellen Henderson.

Pannekoek is also president of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), a UNESCO-sanctioned organization that promotes intercultural cooperation and understanding through open and distance learning throughout the world.

AU joins eCampusAlberta

In May 2011, Athabasca University joined eCampusAlberta, one of the fastest-growing online education consortiums in North America. The partnership will encourage greater opportunities for online learners and enhance the quality of online education for Albertan students.

"It's an honour to welcome Athabasca University into the eCampusAlberta consortium. For many decades, Athabasca University has been among the world's leading institutions in the field of distance education, and the university offers a wealth of experience that will be a great benefit to students in Alberta who are pursuing their studies online," said Ralph Weeks, chair of the eCampusAlberta board and CEO of Medicine Hat College.

eCampusAlberta's membership now consists of 16 of Alberta's post-secondary institutions: 11 colleges, two polytechnical institutions and three universities.

10th anniversary for Science Outreach – Athabasca

Science Outreach – Athabasca celebrated its 10th anniversary in April 2011. Founded by Dr. Robert Holmberg and Dr. Lisa Carter of AU's Faculty of Science and Technology, the group has organized over 300 science talks, field trips, camps and exhibits for kids and adults in 19 communities. Science Outreach – Athabasca also initiated the Bibliography of the Athabasca River Basin (BARB), over 25,000 science references that have been handed over to the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute (ARBRI).

AU video tutorial wins educational innovation award

In May 2011, the Canadian Network for Innovation in Education (CNIE) honoured the Athabasca University-produced series *The Paragraph: A Video Tutorial* with an Award of Merit. The tutorial helps students learn how to write better paragraphs. It consists of five videos with transcripts, a downloadable sample essay and four self-tests.

The tutorial was the brainchild of AU Write Site director Linda McCloud-Bondoc. "Coming across the one-page paragraph again and again in students' writing inspired me to [create this] resource," she said. "This and other common paragraphing problems were showing up in students' assignments, so I set out to write a resource that could deal with those issues."

Eric Brooks appointed judge

After tutoring for Athabasca University in the areas of civil liberties, administrative law and the Canadian legal system for 11 years, Eric Brooks was appointed a judge in the Provincial Court of Alberta in April 2011.

AU parts with Access Copyright licence

On August 31, 2011, Athabasca University parted with its Access Copyright licence. AU is one of dozens of universities that decided to opt out of the licence after Access Copyright, a copyright collective, proposed to increase its fee for printing and photocopying educational materials from its repertoire to \$45 per full-time student. The previous Access Copyright fee was \$3.38 per full-time student.

Some of AU's courses already used alternatives to the Access Copyright repertoire prior to August 31, and many professors are considering alternative digital resources for upcoming revisions. The transition has been relatively smooth. A key alternative to the Access Copyright repertoire is open educational resources (OERs), which are teaching and learning materials available online at no cost. For example, thousands of lessons, e-texts and scholarly journals have become openly accessible online in recent years.



Illustration: Sarah Jackson©



THE TROJAN AMONG US

Dr. Martin Connors discovers Earth's first known Trojan asteroid.

By John O'Brien



Dr. Martin Connors

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

For centuries, astronomers thought Earth had just one travelling companion, the moon. But Athabasca University's Dr. Martin Connors had a different thought, so he went looking for others. It took him 20 years, but he finally found one, a tiny Trojan asteroid now known as 2010 TK₇.

Connors, along with colleagues Dr. Paul Wiegert and Christian Veillet, announced the discovery of Earth's first Trojan in the July 28, 2011, edition of the journal *Nature*.

"After 20 years of looking for this, I did not immediately recognize the telltale signatures on one of the graphs I made," says Connors. "I had to think about it for several hours and then make a different type of plot, and then it leaped out at me. So my first thought was, 'How could I be so stupid?'"

Trojan asteroids were first proposed in 1772 by Italian-French astronomer Joseph-Louis Lagrange. He recognized that there are certain points—now called Lagrange points—where the gravitational pull of the Earth, the sun and a third object, like an asteroid, balance each other off, allowing the third object to remain at a constant distance from the other two. Since then, astronomers have discovered Trojans moving along with Mars, Neptune and Jupiter.

If you think of the Earth as being at 6 o'clock on a clock face, with the sun at the centre, 2010 TK₇ is at about 4 o'clock. Both Earth and the asteroid are in fact moving counterclockwise around the sun, but they keep this relative positioning. Right now, the 300-metre-long rock is about 80 million kilometres away. It won't come any closer to the Earth than 24 million kilometres, at least for the next hundred years.

Connors, using data from NASA's WISE (wide-field infrared survey explorer) telescope, first detected 2010 TK₇ in the fall of 2010. He and his team confirmed the discovery using the optical Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope (CFHT) in April.

"Because this particular Trojan lives in the daylight sky, it's incredibly difficult to detect using visible light. WISE uses infrared, so we were able to overcome that limitation," says Connors. "WISE is a game-changer."

Connors, who also serves as Canada Research Chair in Space Science, says that now one Trojan has been discovered, there are very likely others. And for organizations like NASA, that's important—Trojan asteroids can be a stepping stone to further deep-space exploration like landing on Mars, a goal set by U.S. President Barack Obama in 2010.

"You can land on an asteroid very easily. They're easier to get to than the moon, even if they are further away," says Connors.

However, NASA will not be landing on 2010 TK₇. Earth's Trojan has a tilted orbit, making it an

unsuitable candidate for a mission. Other Trojans will need to be found, but the discovery of the 2010 TK₇ will make it easier for astronomers to get telescope time to look for them.

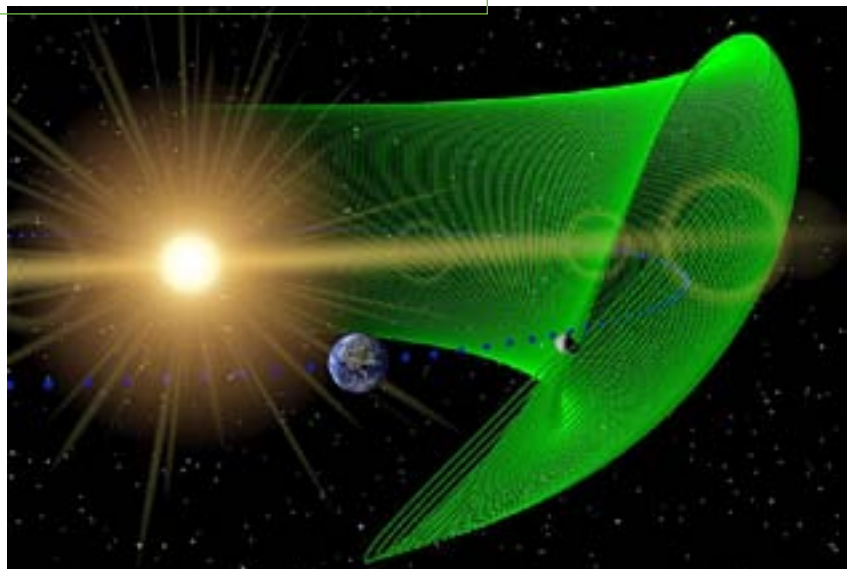
It's unlikely, though, that WISE will be part of that search. The space-based telescope was turned off earlier this year when it ran out of coolant. But Connors vows to keep looking.

"There are several ways we will do this. One is that we hope the attention brought to the discovery will get others ... to search for similar ones now that we have shown that this class of objects actually exists. The next approach is to apply for telescope time, which is difficult to get on big telescopes, and look further ourselves. Finally, we have two 0.4-metre diameter telescopes being put into service at AU. Despite these being much smaller than large professional telescopes (for example the CFHT is 3.6 metres in diameter), our northerly location allows us to see parts of the sky not visible to other telescopes, which could be an advantage."

Earth Trojans could give us valuable information about the early Earth, since they could be a "deep freeze" of unchanged material from the time of our planet's formation. In the distant future, they could even be mines in the sky for materials we need to venture further into space and even for high-value minerals to be brought back to Earth, says Connors.

Meanwhile, he'll be looking for other things too—he's overseeing the construction of a new geophysical observatory near AU's main campus in Athabasca. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2011, and Connors is looking forward to making new discoveries. What will he find? Stay tuned.

"You can land on an asteroid very easily. They're easier to get to than the moon, even if they are further away."



The Trojan's orbit around the Earth. Illustration courtesy of Paul Wiegert, University of Western Ontario, and NASA.

student stories

By Cathy Nickel

STUDENT PROFILES

Online opportunity reaches the Caribbean islands

Canada-CARICOM e-learning scholarship gives Emma Charles an opportunity she wouldn't have had otherwise.

Not many Athabasca University students can say their studies were interrupted by a hurricane or that, while coping with its aftermath, they were able to meet their course deadlines. Emma Charles, a resident of the island country of Saint Lucia, can.

Charles is one of about 100 students from the Caribbean to receive a scholarship through the Canadian federal government's Canada-CARICOM Virtual University Scholarship Program. About 40 AU students in the Caribbean region have received scholarships that fully offset the costs of one of two AU certificate programs: Counselling Women and Computing and Information Systems.

Taking the Counselling Women certificate at AU is a dream come true for the 30-year-old Charles, who lives in the north part of the island with her three-year-old son Johnathan and her grandparents. "I was overjoyed to get the scholarship," she says of the chance to build on her sociology degree. "I just wouldn't have been able to do this program without it and without the program being online."

The opportunity to study with a Canadian university is typically beyond the means of most Caribbean students, she explains, especially if they have to go out of country. In fact, pursuing post-secondary education usually means quitting a job, and there's no guarantee of employment after graduation. All of this makes Charles keenly aware that her success may have an impact on future government programs.

Emma Charles and her son Johnathan

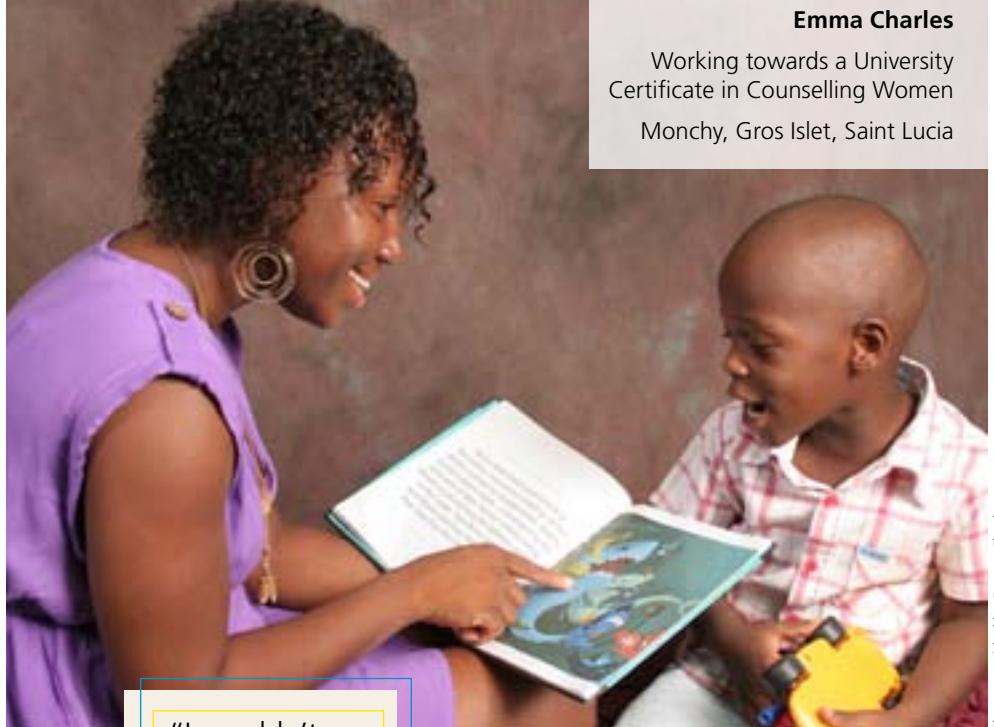


Photo provided by Emma Charles

Emma Charles

Working towards a University Certificate in Counselling Women
Monchy, Gros Islet, Saint Lucia

"I wouldn't have been able to do this program without [the scholarship] and without it being online."

"How well we do will influence the opportunities available for people from my country and the entire Caribbean," she says. "I have to do this and I have to do well." That drive has resulted in six As and one B+ earned in the seven courses she's taken so far, and she's shooting for straight As on her final three courses this year.

Her commitment to her education is a study in determination. For two years, this has been her schedule:

Get up at 2 a.m. every weekday. Hit the books until about 5 a.m. Wake up her son. Make lunches. Get ready for day care and work. Travel into the city (Castries). Start work at 7:45 a.m. (where she is the Bank of Saint Lucia's only credit card officer). Take 10 minutes for lunch and use the rest of the break to catch up on schoolwork. Leave at 4:15 p.m. Pick up Johnathan. Head home. Make dinner. Settle him down to sleep. And get ready for bed and another early morning.

"It's been hectic but I'm surviving," she concludes with a laugh. "And with Athabasca University, I still have my job and my family and I haven't given up anything except some of my time.

"Now I realize that education never stops—and AU has made me unable to stop. I've turned into a lifelong learner and am already looking for something else to do online."

Vicky Sandouga

MBA (2003) and an AU student
for over 30 years
Edmonton, Alberta



A lifetime passion for learning

After 30 years, Vicky Sandouga is still studying with AU.

Vicky Sandouga knows how to put the “life” in lifelong learning.

The Edmonton resident’s very first Athabasca University course was in child psychology, which she used raising four children. Next came business courses supporting a family business. Then she enrolled in AU finance courses that led to her Certified Management Accountant designation and her MBA, which she completed in 2003. In 2010 she retired early, and today she takes courses for the sheer joy of learning.

“I registered in my first AU course and was hooked forever,” Sandouga says with a laugh. “My experience has been exceptional. The flexibility enabled me to work, raise a family and continue with my education.”

Working alongside students from around the world and sharing real-life situations—especially in the MBA program and in more current courses—is valuable, she says, because it provides new perspectives and challenges. “Even though I was doing independent study, I never felt like I was alone,” she says.

She also felt like she had something to contribute, which was affirmed at the end of her GLST 611: Social Movements course when the prof said, “It was really nice to have you as a valued student in this course. I learned a lot through you.”

“I’m at an exciting time in my life because I can take courses for my own interests,” Sandouga says. “What I’m taking at AU now is very personal.”

Photo: Christy Dean Photography

Finding his focus and finding success

Jimmy Vu renews his faith in education after discovering AU.

Jimmy Vu felt that going to university and attending classes was frustrating and a waste of time—until he found Athabasca University.

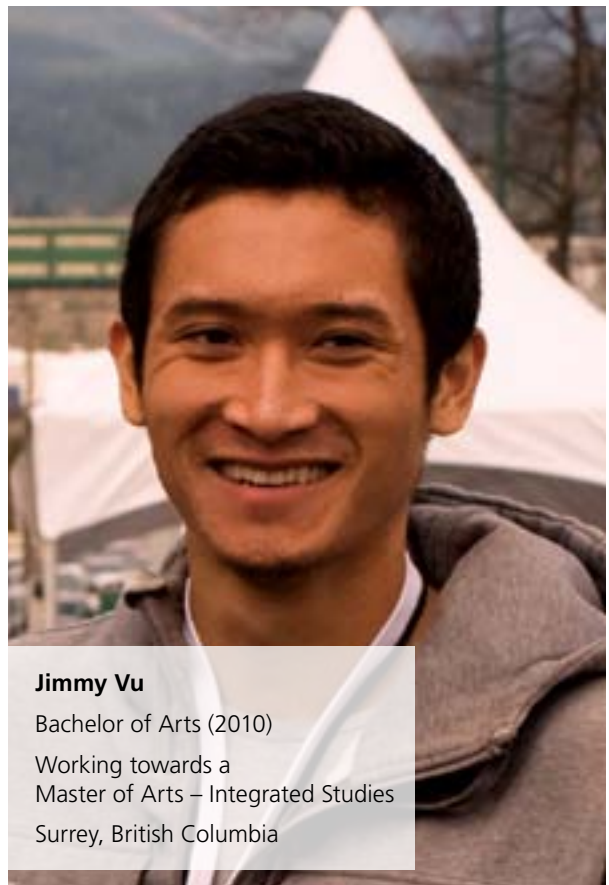
In five years, the Surrey, B.C., resident boosted his GPA from 1.9 to 3.6 and earned a BA (Psychology and Sociology) from AU. Today he’s working toward his Master of Arts in Integrated Studies, which he hopes to complete in 2013. He says that AU’s flexibility and the appreciation that different people learn in different ways is perfect for someone like him who struggles with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD).

“I don’t learn well in a traditional class environment,” Vu says, explaining that distance learning enables him to do his coursework when he’s best able to focus. “For me, distance education means I’m not at the mercy of someone else’s schedule. I’m very self-aware. I know when I’m in the zone and can get the work done.”

Vu was diagnosed with AD/HD in the second year of his BA program. While the structure of traditional schooling might work for children with AD/HD, Vu believes that for adults like him, “it’s important to embrace new ways of learning that can accommodate the unique learning styles of adults with AD/HD.”

Because people with AD/HD can be impulsive, “distance education is one tool that helps students embrace their impulsivity and learn when they suddenly feel motivated to do so,” Vu says.

The success he’s experienced with AU, and the flexibility that has enabled him to work in the non-profit sector while in school, has been deeply satisfying to him. He envisions a career centred around helping others.



Jimmy Vu

Bachelor of Arts (2010)

Working towards a
Master of Arts – Integrated Studies
Surrey, British Columbia

Photo provided by Jimmy Vu

lasting impact

from AU Development and External Relations

Athabasca University is constantly finding new ways to open the doors to higher education for more people and to enhance the distance learning experience. Here are just a few examples of how support from individuals, businesses and others is enriching learning, helping students fulfill their academic dreams, and leaving a lasting impact on both our AU community and the world.

More scholarships and bursaries... a lot more

The cost of higher education can deter many people from pursuing their post-secondary dreams. As part of its commitment to open access, Athabasca University is eager to eliminate financial barriers to learning, just as distance education eliminates locational barriers. A 300% increase in the value of scholarships and bursaries awarded over the past four years—from \$300,000 in 2006 to \$900,000 in 2010—is proof that everything is possible when donors step forward to invest in education.

A donor who wishes to remain anonymous, for example, has recently established the Master of Arts - Integrated Studies Making a Difference bursary. Each year, one student will receive \$2,400 for a maximum of five years, encouraging the student to complete his or her studies. The bursary is open to part-time students who are single parents, who are aboriginal, who have a disability or who are recent immigrants.

Last year, Barry Walker, AU alumnus and chair of the university's board of governors, and his wife, Valerie, created the Walker Family Master of Counselling Scholarship and the Walker Family Faculty of Business Scholarship, which recognize the achievement of two students every year.

"Investing in the education of young people, and especially those who may not have access to traditional higher-education opportunities, is profoundly important," Walker said. "My wife and I are passionate about giving students opportunities to gain the knowledge to succeed."



2011-12 writer-in-residence Tololwa Mollel

After a successful 2010-11 writer-in-residence program in which Joseph Boyden served as Athabasca University's first writer-in-residence, AU students will again have an unparalleled opportunity to interact with, learn from and be inspired by one of the world's top writers.

Internationally celebrated children's author, dramatist and storyteller Tololwa Mollel will be AU's 2011-12 writer-in-residence. During his one-year appointment, made possible by funding from the Canada Council for the Arts, Mollel will work directly with students in person and through virtual visits and online forums. He'll also engage with local and national writers and writers' organizations and help to increase knowledge and appreciation of Canadian authors through the Canadian Writers website maintained by AU's Centre for Language and Literature.

"What primarily motivates me to work with schools ... is the sense I get during visits that I'm engaging in a creative partnership with students," Mollel writes. "It is a partnership in which we all seek to learn out of a mutual passion for writing, for books and reading, for story and the creative process and at times for performance. But it is also a partnership in which my role is very much to mentor like I too was mentored, as a child and through the years to the present."

Born in Tanzania and now residing in Edmonton, Mollel has written 16 books—including the award-winning *The Orphan Boy*, *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper!*, *Big Boy* and *My Rows and Piles of Coins*—as well as several plays and stories for performance. He is currently working on life stories from across diverse communities in Edmonton.

Canadian Film Online: Casting the spotlight on Canadian film

The Canadian Film Online project, led by associate professor Dr. Evelyn Ellerman, will enable e-students across the country and beyond to learn about Canadian filmmaking through access to 80 Canadian films and a variety of online learning resources. Chronicling Canadian English and French filmmaking since the 1960s, the content will be provided in French and English and will include:

- 80 historically significant English and French films
- a relational database of film production information
- audio commentaries
- three interactive analytical tools
- video interviews with 16 founding figures of the Canadian film industry

All of the content will be accessible to AU students and film students from other universities. The films will eventually be available to the public as well.

"This is an exciting project that reflects what Athabasca University does best: making learning resources available to people wherever they may live," explains Dr. Pamela Walsh, vice-president,

advancement. "By digitizing these films and creating new online content, we're creating wonderful new e-learning opportunities and also contributing to the preservation and understanding of Canadian culture."

The Canadian Film Online project is being undertaken by AU's Communication Studies program and the e-lab, AU's virtual media facility. The project received more than \$330,000 in funding from the federal government's Department of Canadian Heritage Canada Interactive Fund in March 2011.

Canadian Film Online builds on AU's MediaCan project, the largest online scholarly resource in Canada for the study of Canadian media, and AU's e-lab. It is being completed in co-operation with the National Film Board, Library and Archives Canada, Telefilm Canada, the Directors Guild of Canada and the Canadian Association of Media Producers.



Making a philanthropic difference at AU

You can help to create more opportunities for students and further enhance the AU learning experience. To find out more and to donate online, please visit: www2.athabascau.ca/giving



A PHYSICAL MILESTONE for a VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY

AU opens its new Academic and Research Centre (ARC).

By Erin Ottosen



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Three storeys tall, over 5,000 square metres (53,800 square feet) and just under four years in the making, Athabasca University's \$30-million Academic and Research Centre (ARC) is now open. The university celebrated the new building on July 29, 2011, with guests and friends such as Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach.

"The ARC is the first new building on the Athabasca campus since the original building was opened in 1984," said Barry Walker, chair of AU's governing board. "It will provide much-needed work space for the university to grow here in Athabasca. We are very proud of the design of the building, particularly given ... our commitment to being green."

With an array of sustainable, environmentally friendly features (see page 16), the ARC is on track to earn a gold certification from Canada's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System—one step above the minimum silver required by the Government of Alberta. But more than that, the ARC is a breathtaking building with an elegant design.

The ARC's east wall curves gently out, and the roof, which is at a 15-degree angle, is constructed from spruce lumber that gives the ceiling a warm golden hue. Large windows are a prominent feature on all three floors, providing panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. The most impressive feature, however, might be that sunlight shines throughout the entire building as the sun travels across the sky.

"The way daylight comes into the building and how bright and luminous the whole space is, that everybody has access to daylight, is really energizing," said Vivian Manasc, senior principal of Manasc Isaac Architects, the firm that designed the ARC.

These design features and many others will create a healthy work space for the 120 faculty and staff members moving into the ARC this fall.

Dwindling space for faculty and staff has been an issue for AU ever since the university began to grow rapidly in the late 1990s. Over the years, AU has had to find new spaces in Athabasca and Edmonton to house staff, and more faculty members have elected to work from home.

"So many times [people said to me], 'You're building a building for a distance institution. Why do they need buildings? Aren't they virtual?'" said Manasc. "Yet it's because AU is a virtual university that this building is so important. It creates the social capital, the hub, the heart, the physical representation of the most significant open university in this country."

The ARC's construction was made possible by a \$30-million grant from the Government of Alberta. "Now is the time to ... convert the proceeds [from oil and gas] into a knowledge-based economy," said Premier Stelmach at the ARC's official opening. "That is where we've got to be, because the world is changing rapidly, and it's education, innovation and research that's going to get us there."



Photo: Jillian Anderson

Highlights of the ARC's design

ARC principal architect Vivian Manasc and ARC project manager Wayne Ferguson share their favourite features of the building along with some of the features that qualify the ARC for a gold LEED certification:

- The ARC's open-air design reflects the openness of AU, Canada's Open University. The middle of each floor is open space, for example, and many of the interior partitions are glass. "We spent a lot of time working with the university to create the kind of working environment that would suit ... the values and the vision of AU," says Manasc.
- The windows are configured so that sunlight shines throughout the entire building as the sun travels across the sky. "As the sun rises in the east, by the time it gets to 10 o'clock, that sunshine will be seen on the west side of the building, which is unusual," says Ferguson.
- The wood in the building is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, which means it was sustainably managed when it was a forest.
- To encourage greener modes of transportation, the ARC has lanes for carpoolers and bike racks and showers for cyclists. There's even a hitching post for people riding horses.
- Unlike typical air conditioning systems that blow air and need hundreds of litres of water to operate, the ARC's system doesn't require any water or blow any air—rather, a chilled slab built into the floors causes cold air to drop down to the floor below it.
- "All the mechanical and electrical components you would normally expect to find up in the ceiling behind tiles are actually under the floor. So our ceiling is exposed concrete painted white," says Ferguson.
- Most devices in the electrical and mechanical systems have meters that monitor their energy use. "Just about every ... device that burns energy, we can tell how much it's burning, so we can plan on costs for operation and watch the efficiency of equipment as it ages," says Ferguson.
- "Wherever we could, we specified products that have very high amounts of recycled content," says Manasc. For example, in the ARC's concrete, there's a high amount of fly ash, a waste product from burning coal.
- The triple-glazed, high-efficiency windows open "so you can always get fresh air," says Ferguson.
- Finally, the ARC has a community garden that debuted this summer with crops of corn and potatoes.



Photo: Jillian Anderson



AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek and Premier Ed Stelmach

Photo: Blaise MacWullin



Photo: Jillian Anderson

conferences



International Academy
of African Business &
Development

**Challenges
in the Era of
Globalization**

IAABD: Finding solutions for Africa's economic challenges

In May 2011, AU hosted the 12th Annual International Academy of African Business and Development (IAABD) conference in Edmonton. According to organizers, the IAABD event was the first academic conference held in Canada focusing on business in and with Africa.

Co-chairs for the conference were Dr. Simon Sigué and Dr. Jacob Musila of the Faculty of Business and Dr. Meenal Shrivastava (see page 20) of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Creating Rural Connections 2011: Increasing the vitality of rural communities

In April 2011, AU co-hosted the Creating Rural Connections conference with the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) in Edmonton. The conference dealt with maintaining and increasing the vitality and well-being of rural communities.

LAK12 learning analytics conference: Scheduled for spring

In 2011, AU's Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute (TEKRI) organized the successful 1st International Conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge in Banff, Alberta. Now the second edition of the conference, LAK12, is set to take place in Vancouver April 29 to May 2, 2012. TEKRI is again sponsoring and co-hosting the conference.

Learning analytics is concerned with the collection, analysis and reporting of learning-related data. In recent years there has been an unprecedented explosion in the quantity and quality of such data, which educators can use to enhance learning experiences in a range of learning contexts from formal academic learning to the emerging landscape of free, open, online social learning.

2nd Alfresco conference: Sharing Alfresco best practices

The 2nd Annual Alberta Alfresco Conference, organized by the Alberta Alfresco Users Group and held in December 2010 in Edmonton, was an opportunity for staff from AU and other organizations to learn about the latest developments in Alfresco content management, to share their successes in using Alfresco, and to find solutions for Alfresco-related challenges at their organizations. At AU, Alfresco is in the process of being implemented university-wide for web content management as well as records and document management.

moodlemoot* 2011

Fostering open learning and collaboration

AU co-hosted the third Canadian MoodleMoot and social learning gathering in Edmonton in May 2011, the largest Moot so far. The theme this year was open learning and collaboration. Keynote speeches were delivered by Stephen Downes of the National Research Council of Canada and Martin Dougiamas, the founder of Moodle. Moodle is an online learning management system that AU uses for its courses.

Research Forum 2011: Showcasing the university's research

Athabasca University's Academic Research Committee, in conjunction with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, hosted the university's 2011 Research Forum in Edmonton. The theme this year was interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.

The Athabasca University Research Forum showcases AU research for the benefit of the university community.

research buzz

AU awarded UNESCO/ COL Chair in Open Educational Resources

In January 2011, AU was awarded a Chair in Open Educational Resources (OERs) by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

The chair, the first UNESCO chair to be established in the Prairie provinces, is international in scope and focuses on making education more accessible through the use of open educational resources (OERs).

OERs are teaching and learning materials freely available online to instructors, students and self-learners. "These resources could be a textbook, a group of lessons, a program, a game, an application ... anything that's used for learning and is available online," said Dr. Rory McGreal, AU's associate vice-president of research and the leader of the AU team working on initiatives related to the chair.

"There are nearly seven billion people in the world. There are all kinds of problems. But I know this: whatever solutions we come up with, education is going to be part of those solutions. And we've got to find ways of educating six-and-a-half billion people," said McGreal. "We've got to look at new ways of going about it, and I think OERs are going to play a major role in promoting that mass education."

The chair is supported by over \$500,000 in funding from COL, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's Access to the Future Fund.



Dr. Rory McGreal

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

AU professors finish manuscripts with help of PARSE award

Dr. Lorna Stefanick, associate professor in the Centre for State and Legal Studies, and Dr. Gina Wong, associate professor and chair of the Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology, were the 2010-11 recipients of the AU President's Award for Research and Scholarly Excellence (PARSE).

The PARSE is an annual award recognizing excellence in research scholarship by a full-time AU faculty or staff member. The award consists of four months of research leave to help recipients ready major works for publication.

Stefanick's work is called *Autonomy, Community, and Democracy: The Citizens' Guide to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy*. Wong edited the collection *Moms Gone Mad: Motherhood and Madness, Resistance and Oppression*.

RBC supports Athabasca River Basin Research Institute with \$250,000

RBC (Royal Bank of Canada), through the RBC Blue Water Project, donated \$250,000 to AU in June 2011 in support of the university's Athabasca River Basin Research Institute (ARBRI).

"We need to dispel the myth that there is limitless water in Canada and start paying attention to our water consumption," said Bruce MacKenzie, regional president of RBC. "We are proud to be part of an initiative that gives organizations around the world a chance to make a difference, whether it's through education of water issues, watershed protection and clean-up or access to clean drinking water."

ARBRI was established in 2008 to bring together diverse communities to help preserve a vital natural resource: water.

Dr. Tracey Lindberg named Canada Research Chair

Dr. Tracey Lindberg of AU's Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research (CWIKR) was awarded a Canada Research Chair in Traditional Knowledge, Legal Orders and Laws in November 2010. Lindberg's research identifies how Indigenous legal traditions can assist in the rejuvenation of Indigenous rights. "I am so honoured to work in this area with Indigenous nations, communities and citizens," Lindberg said. "It's an absolute joy to do this work, and I am exceedingly grateful to have been afforded the opportunity."

Research projects and grants

Advancing Economic, Environmental and Social Sustainability: An Academic/Municipal Partnership for Resource-Dependent Communities in Alberta

Researchers: Dr. Pat Fahy, Dr. Michael Gismondi, Dr. Deborah Hurst, Dr. Aris Solomon and Dr. Lorna Stefanick

Estimated budget: \$900,000

From: Various sources including the Alberta Regional Development Network (ARDN)

Assessment and Accreditation: An International Case Study on Acceptance of Digital Resources

Researchers: Dr. Rory McGreal, Dr. Dianne Conrad and Dr. Wayne Mackintosh (external co-investigator)

Funding received: \$22,000

From: SSHRC

Buying Citizenship: Women, Gender and Consumer Activism in Canada: 1890 to 1939

Researcher: Dr. Donica Belisle

Funding received: \$59,000

From: SSHRC

Critical Incidents in Counsellor Education for Multicultural Counselling and Social Justice

Researcher: Dr. Sandra Collins (co-investigator)

Funding received: \$88,000

From: SSHRC

Faculty Perspectives on Teaching with New Technology: Uncovering a Possible Case of Unrealistic Expectations

Researcher: Dr. Martha Cleveland-Innes

Funding received: \$39,015

From: SSHRC

From Streets to Homes: Mapping the Rise of Housing First Policies and Programs in Canada

Researcher: Dr. Josh Evans

Funding received: \$36,097

From: SSHRC

An International Collaborative Approach for Vision and Falls

Researcher: Dr. Pamela Hawranik

Funding received: \$10,000

From: Canadian Institute for Health Research

Multimedia Object Research Platform Host (MORPH) for Adaptive and Mobile Learning

Researchers: Dr. Sabine Graf, Dr. Dragan Gasevic and Dr. Vive Kumar

Funding received: \$357,539

From: CFI

The Relationship between Workplace Safety Culture, Safety Behaviour and Injury Claims

Researcher: Dr. Bob Barnetson, Dr. Shawn Fraser and Carole Anne Lunny (AU graduate student)

Funding received: \$11,991

From: Work Safe BC

The Relationship Between Level of Participation, Relationship Ties and Identity Salience and the Effects of Cyber-Activist Dimensions on General Activist Dimensions

Researcher: Sharone Daniel (AU graduate student)

Funding received: \$17,500

From: SSHRC

Semantic Technologies for Enterprise 2.0 Collaboration

Researcher: Dr. Dragan Gasevic (Canada Research Chair in Semantic Technologies)

Funding received: \$24,961

From: NSERC

Studying the Implementation of Project Management as a Strategic Organizational Change

Researcher: Dr. Janice Thomas

Funding received: US\$50,000

From: Project Management Institute (PMI)

Over \$800,000 to mobile learning OSMoSYS research

A group of AU researchers received \$865,380 in 2011 for a multi-year project called Open Social Mobile Systems (OSMoSYS). OSMoSYS proposes to build a research network that will enable staff to analyze the effectiveness of mobile learning activities and social networking systems. This will involve creating, capturing and indexing content in the mobile context.

“The great thing about this award is the opportunities for connected learning and research that it affords. The research that will be enabled through this project cuts across many disciplinary areas and enables a diverse group of researchers to extend and enhance their capabilities together and individually,” said Dr. Jon Dron, principal investigator for OSMoSYS and associate professor in AU’s School of Computing and Information Systems.

“Connected and networked, these rich multimedia, mobile and social tools will enhance knowledge and learning in places and ways that have hitherto been difficult or impossible.”

Funding for OSMoSYS has been provided by a \$346,152 grant from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), a matching grant from the Government of Alberta’s Small Equipment Grants Program (SEGP), and internal sources.



Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Dr. Jon Dron

Dr. Jay Smith honoured for research on Dalit movement

Dr. Jay Smith of AU’s Centre for State and Legal Studies received an award from the Chetna Association of Canada in June 2011 for his research on India’s Dalit movement.

Smith’s research is on how and why groups take their political causes outside of their own countries. In particular, he has focused on the Dalits (formerly called untouchables) who have taken their campaign for social and economic justice beyond the borders of India with the aid of new communications technology.

Dr. Jay Smith



Photo: Ed Ellis Photography

meet the teachers

By Erin Ottosen

FACULTY PROFILES

From India to South Africa to Athabasca

Political economist brings her international experience to a new AU program.

"It was an accidental discovery that led me to a whole new world," says Athabasca University associate professor Dr. Meenal Shrivastava.

At the time, she was in her early 20s. Thinking that she might like to work in government in her home country of India, she applied to study international relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Out of thousands of applicants, she was one of five who was accepted into the program. And when she entered that program, she discovered political economy and global studies. These intertwined academic disciplines united her interests, and they would position her to contribute to rebuilding South Africa post-apartheid. But most importantly to her, they have kept her endlessly fascinated.

"With political economy, you are looking at the politics behind economic decisions and how the economy affects political relationships," says Shrivastava.

She describes international political economy, her specialty, as "an umbrella concept that pervades ... not just the international system, but your day-to-day life as well."

For example, in an exercise she developed for her new course GLST 205: Building Blocks of Global Studies, she asks students to inventory their clothes and collect information such as the countries where their clothes were made.

"Then they are asked these questions of international political economy," she says. "What [do the clothes] tell you about international trade practices for instance?"

"You can apply political economy questions to just about everything: the food you eat to the culture you are part of to the books you read to the music you listen to—just about everything is interconnected."

After completing her PhD, Shrivastava taught at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. "It was like living in New York," she says. "There's this constant vibe; it's humming. And you are so close to the seat of power in Africa."



Dr. Meenal Shrivastava

Associate Professor/Academic Coordinator
Political Economy (POEC) & Global Studies (GLST)
Edmonton, Alberta

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

The apartheid in South Africa had ended in 1994, just a few years before Shrivastava arrived. She found the country was ready to apply her research as it charted a new path for itself. "In this new nation, where institutions and structures were still evolving, I felt I was contributing to the evolution of those structures," she says. For example, some of her research helped the country develop training for its diplomats.

"It was just so exciting to be in the middle of all of that, to be part of this new nation that was emerging in front of your eyes."

Shrivastava was enticed to join AU particularly because of the opportunity to develop a global studies program for the university. "It was an amazing leap of faith both for me and for Athabasca University," she says. Her job interview was over the phone, and she had never visited Canada outside the summer months. "I couldn't even conceptualize what -20 C felt like," she says with a laugh.

When it came time to develop the global studies program, "I really wanted to do it right," she says. "So I conducted a review, as comprehensive as possible, of global studies [programs offered by universities around the world]." In two years, she reviewed over 70 programs. The research laid the foundation for AU's global studies program and was also published in the Berkeley journal *New Global Studies*.

"Instead of launching straight into a degree program, we will first offer a global studies minor," she says. "Given the student inquiries I'm getting, I think there will be quite an uptake."

Keeping up with the changing nature of crime

Police inspector and AU tutor takes an academic approach to crime prevention.

On January 17, 2008, Arcelie Laoagan was murdered near the Franklin C-Train station in Calgary. Surveillance cameras showed that her killer, a stranger to her, had ridden the train with her and followed her away from the station.

The tragedy led to an audit of Calgary Transit's security practices. "And that resulted in wholesale changes to the way we provide safety [at Calgary Transit]," says Brian Whitelaw, an Athabasca University criminal justice tutor and Calgary Police Service (CPS) inspector. Whitelaw was seconded to Calgary Transit to lead the systemic changes around safety and security.

"We've been steadily ... building our program so that we can reduce crime and also reduce quite significantly the conditions that can lead up to crime," says Whitelaw. "There's been a real transformation."

Whitelaw is also capturing the transformation in a disorder management strategy for Calgary Transit. "It weaves together key criminological theories into a practical roadmap for how to police large transit systems," he says. This model is expected to serve as a blueprint for other city transit systems across Canada.

These are just some of Whitelaw's many accomplishments in helping to ensure that police are well-informed about the evolving issues in their line of work and well-equipped to deal with them. He's co-authored two textbooks on policing and developed a curriculum for new CPS officers. At AU, he's the author and tutor of CRJS 425: White-Collar Crime and Investigation, a course that explores emerging types of crime like transnational fraud and computer crime.

"As police, we have to be very mindful of the fact that crime is changing in ways that maybe are not completely understood at this point," he says.

Originally, Whitelaw planned to be a lawyer. But while he was working on his political science degree, he took a job guarding prisoners for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and developed a strong appreciation for police work. After he graduated, he joined CPS and was soon logging countless hours on surveillance.

"There can be a lot of down time when you're waiting for a bad guy to get up in the morning, so it made sense to pursue more education," Whitelaw says. "I took my master's degree [in public policy, law and administration] from 1988 to 1993. While I was out doing a long, boring surveillance, I could... [do homework], as long as I wasn't watching the front door of a place."

After completing his master's, he was hired by Mount Royal College (now a university) to teach policing. The first course he was assigned had an American textbook. "I thought, well, this isn't great," he says. So he contacted criminologist Dr. Curt Griffiths, and they wrote a textbook called *Canadian Police Work*.

"We were able to fill a gap with this general introductory textbook," says Whitelaw. "It really did take off for us. The Ontario police foundations program adopted it and then ended up adopting the textbook that Rick Parent and I wrote." That other textbook is *Community-Based Strategic Policing in Canada*.

Whitelaw has worked for AU since 1997. "The virtual classroom [at AU] is ideal from the learner's perspective," he says. "Many of the folks who take my course are police officers, so they work rotating shifts ... They're able to complete the coursework on their own time, and I try to be as responsive to their schedules as I can be."

Occasionally Whitelaw has helped his AU students deal with the evolving issues in their work in a rather hands-on fashion. "I had a student, an RCMP officer in the Northwest Territories, and he had a dangerous person barricaded inside a house, and he was by himself," says Whitelaw. "He wasn't able to [reach] anybody for help ... Somehow he managed to get a hold of me through my 1-800 [tutor] number. I was able to provide police advice and help him get the resources he required."

"I've got a lot of adult learners who know incredible amounts of information," he concludes.

"I try to structure their learning, but in turn I learn a lot from them. And being good at Athabasca University also means I'm good in policing."

"The virtual classroom [at AU] is ideal from the learner's perspective."



Brian Whitelaw

Tutor, Criminal Justice (CRJS)
Calgary, Alberta

RECOGNIZING DEMPSEY BOB

By Cathy Nickel

AU awarded its 2011 honorary degree to an acclaimed sculptor rekindling Tahltan-Tlingit art traditions.

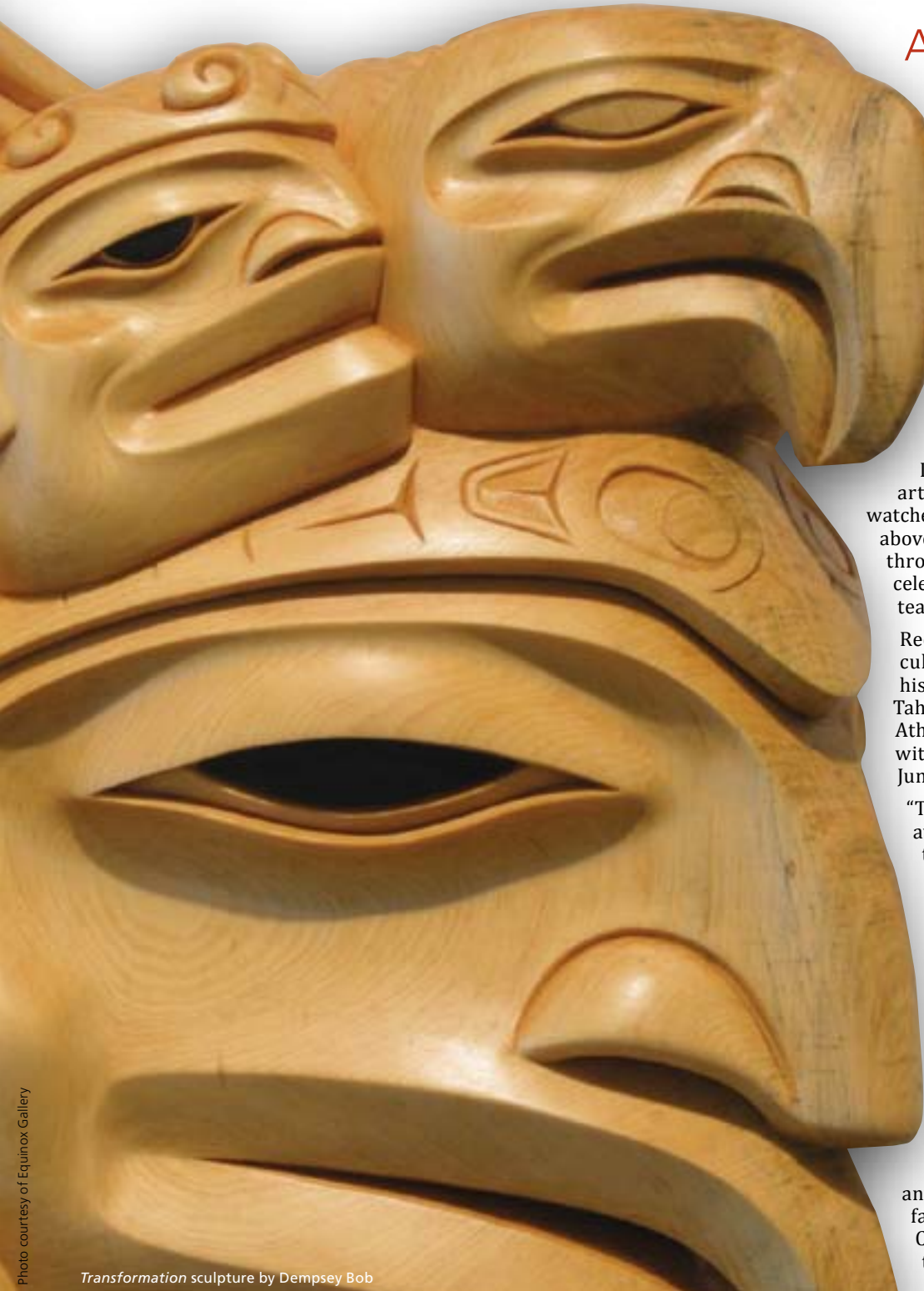
Dempsey Bob wasn't born a great artist. Rather, he says, he has watched, listened, worked, studied, and above all, practised—always learning throughout his life—to become the celebrated sculptor and dedicated teacher he is today.

Recognizing the historical and cultural significance of his art and his commitment to preserving Tahltan-Tlingit native art traditions, Athabasca University awarded Bob with an honorary Doctor of Laws on June 9, 2011.

"This is bigger than an individual award," Bob says, appreciating the connection between his self-described status as a lifetime student and an educational institution dedicated to removing barriers to lifelong learning.

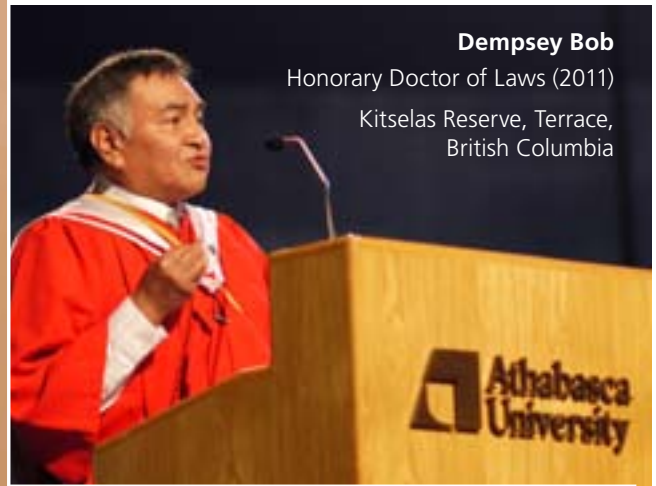
"This award is also recognition of the people who helped me and taught me," he adds. "Without them, I wouldn't be here."

"Here" is everywhere. A prolific artist, hundreds of his works—blankets, masks, sculptures, carvings and more—are found in leading museums, private and corporate collections and public facilities worldwide including the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Smithsonian Institution, Japan's National Museum of Ethnology



Transformation sculpture by Dempsey Bob

Photo courtesy of Equinox Gallery



Dempsey Bob

Honorary Doctor of Laws (2011)
Kitselas Reserve, Terrace,
British Columbia



Dempsey Bob receives his honorary doctorate from Athabasca University president Dr. Frits Pannekoek at the university's 2011 convocation.

and the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, Germany. At the Vancouver International Airport, a collection of his colourful carved cedar masks greets passengers in the domestic arrivals area, and a large cedar sculpture, *The Story of Fog Woman and Raven*, is featured prominently in the west wing of the international terminal.

Bob was born into a heritage of great art in 1948 in the Tahltan village of Telegraph Creek on the Stikine River in northwestern B.C. Unfortunately, it was a time when his community's art traditions were being outlawed and at risk of being lost entirely. Today these traditions are being saved, and through the efforts of Bob and others, they're now experiencing a rebirth. For example, Bob is passing on his knowledge to a new generation of young artists at a community school affiliated with the Emily Carr University of Art and Design. The school is pivotal to the continuation of native art.

Just as he was inspired by his mentors, notably acclaimed artist Freda Diesing and grandparents who told him stories, taught him songs and gave him direction, Bob relishes the opportunity to offer similar guidance to others.

"Our people are spiritually strong and we put that in our work," he says. "If you understand sculpture, you understand that Northwest Coast art is some of the finest done any time and anywhere. What modern artists got from us was freedom of form and ideas."

Keeping traditions alive does not mean replicating old art forms, but mastering them in order to interpret traditions in new ways, Bob explains. "Everything that has ever been done

was, at one time, contemporary. It becomes traditional when it is good—and people know what is good—and when it is accepted and used."

Good art, he says, comes from passion, knowledge and practice. "You have to know many things—your medium, traditional tools, design, drawing, form, colour, shadows, shapes—and you have to put in hours of study and practice. If you're a sculptor, you must sculpt.

"Art can't come from nothing. It needs a foundation to grow on. Art is about life and experiences, and that's where learning and knowledge comes in. You must have passion and a willingness to learn, a curiosity. Like life, art is very complex. It takes a lifetime to mature as an artist."

Inspiration for his work comes from traditional stories and from where he lives: "sculpture country—big mountains, big rivers, big land. Wherever you live affects what you see, and a true artist sees what he truly knows. It's a delicate balance. You have to know the piece and know yourself. If you push it too far, you can make it so slick that it becomes sterile. You have to find that balance in yourself, and that's what takes forever.

"There is a lot of talent in the world," he concludes. "But talent is cheap. Commitment, dedication and hard work is the cost we must pay. People think you start out as a good artist, but you start in the wilderness. You have to learn in order to mature as an artist. You have to do your homework."

That learning, he says, can never stop. "It's how I inspire myself—how I keep the hunger and the discipline."

alumni stories

By Cathy Nickel and Erin Ottosen

ALUMNI PROFILES



Bal Gosal with his mother Narinder Kaur Gosal

Bal Gosal

Bachelor of Arts (2010)
Kelowna, British Columbia

Photo: Blaise MacMullin

Inspired by a great teacher to become a great teacher

The president of AU has put Bal Gosal on the path to a career in academia.

Bal Gosal is the first to admit that going to school wasn't exactly his thing. But that all changed when he enrolled at Athabasca University and found a mentor in one of his professors—a mentor who happened to be university president Dr. Frits Pannekoek.

Gosal graduated with a BA in English in 2010 and is now working on a master's in linguistics with the University of Birmingham. His relationship with Pannekoek made a big difference at AU and continues to contribute to his success now. Most importantly, it's helped him set a goal that he might not have expected years ago: to complete a PhD eventually and become a professor.

"I was a horrible student and dropped out of high school," Gosal says. "But I did complete a tech certificate and then fell into teaching English overseas. It was a humbling experience ... to have so many children look at you like you're a movie star and respect you so much [because I was a teacher]."

After six years of teaching people how to get their degrees in Taiwan, Japan and

Korea, he says he realized it was time to get his own. His mother, Narinder Kaur Gosal, whom he describes as "the most special person in my family," had never had the opportunity to pursue education for herself and always supported Gosal's academic pursuits. He turned to AU in order to keep his job while studying and found another strong influence in Pannekoek.

While all of his AU profs were good, he says there was something different about Pannekoek.

"Frits was able to see right through all my excuses. He was incredibly patient and also very clear on the fact that the work I was putting in was sub-par. My writing wasn't interesting to read and I was doing very unimaginative things that wouldn't earn good grades. He was right, of course. He said, 'I think you can do more,' and pushed me a bit. I put in more effort and got higher marks."

Pannekoek's clear, direct, honest communication earned Gosal's trust and respect. "I started going to him more and

more for advice on what I wanted to do, even when it was about more than academics."

The strength of the relationship proved invaluable early in Gosal's master's studies when working at sub-par led to disastrous results on his first writing assignment.

"It was ripped to shreds, and I was devastated. The first person I went to was Frits. He told me it was a fair paper at the undergrad level, but not at the master's level. Coming from him, it took away my anger, and I looked at it in a new way."

Since then, his grades in graduate school have gone up dramatically.

Now that Gosal is working toward becoming a great teacher, he's inspired by Pannekoek's obvious passion for teaching and learning.

"He likes to teach, and it comes out in his teaching. And while so many educators stop learning, Frits is excited by it. It's great to see, and I'm learning so much from him. I hope I can pass it on someday."

Bringing ideas to life

Sarah Doody leverages her technology, business and design skills to develop engaging online products.

Sarah Doody was working as a web designer in Portland, Oregon, when a friend came to her with an ambitious idea for making people's dreams come true.

The idea was a web-based service that would help you find information about your interests and passions along with people who share your interests. It was part search engine, part social media tool, but all of it was geared to help users find whatever they need to achieve their goals in life.

Doody's friend wanted her to help him get the service on its feet, but more than that, he wanted her to move to New York City to do it. Many people would lack the courage to take such a risk, but Doody quit her job and moved to New York.

"I'd never done a start-up company before," she says. "It was an amazing experience. I learned so much in terms of raising money and dealing with investors ... I was there for three years, and we raised US\$4 million." And in 2010, the company was valued at \$20 million.

Why was Doody, an alumna of Athabasca University's Bachelor of Management degree, willing to gamble on her friend's idea? Mostly, it comes down to one simple reason: "I love bringing people's ideas to life," she says. "That's where my skills as an information architect and digital strategist come into play."

Now the director of user experience at another New York start-up, AdKeeper, Doody has forged a career that spans holistically across technology, business and design.

After graduating from high school in Kemptville, Ontario, Doody decided to take advantage of her dual citizenship and attend the University of Texas (UT). "I thought business would be an interesting area to study, and one of the first courses I took was in marketing," she says. She immediately fell in love with it.

While attending UT, she was offered a job at Mentor Graphics, a software company. She took the job but had to quit UT to do so. It was a good decision, she says, because the position taught her a lot about technology and led to other opportunities, but she still wanted to finish her degree. So, as she worked full-time, she studied with AU. She was also able to transfer her UT credits to her AU degree.

"AU was the only university I knew of that would allow me to do all my coursework on my own time and go at my own pace," says Doody. "I loved the flexibility."

As she chipped away at her degree, her career took off. In addition to day jobs, she freelanced for clients across the U.S., providing them with services in interface design, user experience and branding.

"AU was the only university I knew of that would allow me to do all my coursework on my own time and go at my own pace."

Photo provided by Sarah Doody



Sarah Doody

Bachelor of Management (2007)

New York City, New York

As Doody traverses the overlapping spheres of technology, business and design, she writes about her insights on her website www.sarahdoody.com. One original concept that has emerged on her website is a trend she calls personal metrics.

The personal metrics idea came from her love of products like Nike+, which gives runners a constant stream of information about their running—how fast they're going, their rate heart and much more—with the intent that they use this information to improve their performance.

"I'm fascinated with the power of data to change our behaviour," Doody says. "Meaningful data about our actions equips us with the information we need to improve our lifestyles and habits."

Doody has started a website devoted exclusively to personal metrics, www.personalmetrics.us, to help the concept grow.

No matter what work Doody is doing, it's anchored by her love of bringing ideas to life, learning and growing constantly, and striving for innovation.

"I always try and think like a child," she says. "I ask, 'Why do we do that? Why can't we do that?' Asking why over and over eventually makes people think differently, and they try to break down all those barriers around assumptions."

"You've got to look around assumptions to find solutions to problems," she says. "When you look around assumptions, that's really what innovation is."

STUDENT & ALUMNI SUCCESSES

Jade Jager Clark won the Harry Jerome Young Entrepreneur Award from the Black Business and Professional Association for her youth dance school Jade's Hip Hop Academy. Clark, who is 23, is studying governance and politics with AU.

Mystery novelist **Jill Edmondson**, a 2010 graduate of AU's Master of Arts – Integrated Studies, has had her Sasha Jackson mysteries optioned for development as a TV series.

Bachelor of Management student **Nathan Gafuik** picked up silver and bronze medals at the 26th Summer Universiade, making him the first Canadian gymnast to win two individual medals at a world university games.

MBA alumnus **Peter Linke** was appointed president and CEO of Hothead Technologies. Hothead Technologies develops wireless solutions for detecting and preventing heat-related illnesses in athletes, firemen and industrial workers.

John Mills won the 2011 Bryon Paege Memorial Award for his resourcefulness in overcoming barriers to learning. After dropping out of school at 15, not being able to read or write until his mid-20s, and living on the street, Mills now has a self-published book, *I Could and I Did*, and plans to graduate with a bachelor's degree in psychology in fall 2011.

Dr. Tim Nerez was inducted to the Order of Athabasca University in 2011 for his efforts in broadening public awareness of AU. A 1999 graduate of AU's MBA, Nerez was also named the president of Oldenburg Group Incorporated in June 2011.

Dr. Lisa Priebe was inducted to the Order of Athabasca University in 2011 for her dedication to ensuring a high-quality student experience at AU. Priebe, a psychologist who served as president of the AU Students' Union for several years, completed a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Counselling with AU.

AU finance student **Milos Raonic** is now ranked among the top 100 professional tennis players in the world.

Nicola Raycraft, a graduate of AU's MBA program, was awarded the Purchasing Management Association of Canada's 2011 Outstanding Achievement Award.

Bachelor of Management student **Amy Rupp** became the new chief administrative officer for the Village of Champion, Alberta, at the age of 23.

Derek Sidebottom, a graduate of AU's MBA and a Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship winner, was appointed chief people officer of Kabam, a California developer of massive multiplayer social games.

The **Swift Current Broncos** were named the 2010-11 Western Hockey League (WHL) Scholastic Team of the Year for achieving the highest overall academic performance during the season. Eleven of the Broncos were studying with AU through a WHL/AU partnership launched in 2009.

Winners of the 2010 Athabasca University Alumni Awards

The 2010 recipients of Athabasca University's Alumni Awards epitomize the energy and passion of AU alumni. We're proud to recognize their remarkable achievements.

Distinguished Alumni Award

Doug Schindel, MBA (2005)
Edmonton, Alberta

The corporate social responsibility lessons learned by Doug Schindel during his MBA matched the philosophy he's lived at work and in the community for years. The president of Weldco Companies, he is also the chair of the Edmonton YMCA board and the Boyle Renaissance Development Association. "It's very humbling to receive this award," he says. "I do what I do because there's a need."

Rising Star Award

Melanie Kowal,
Bachelor of Science –
Human Science (2009)
Kenora, Ontario

Melanie Kowal's AU degree enabled her to fulfill a lifelong dream: going to medical school to become a family physician. Her passion plus AU's flexibility enabled her to work full-time, be a wife and mother, volunteer and train horses for a program for people with disabilities, all while earning top marks as a student. "If you really want to do something, you can," she says. "And I did, thanks to AU."

Volunteer Service Award

Jimm Simon, MBA (2001)
Stonewall, Manitoba

The principal consultant for Aimm North Heritage Tourism Consulting, Jimm Simon has volunteered in a variety of leadership capacities for more than 25 years and is the past national board chair of the Canadian Cancer Society. "I'm honoured to receive this award because it motivates me to work hard, fight cancer and help people—and if it helps inspire others to do the same, that's even better," he says.

Future Alumni Award

Heather Ruhl, Bachelor of
Commerce (2011)
Edmonton, Alberta

As a student, Heather Ruhl worked full-time, arranged her wedding and built a home. Her proven ability to handle a high workload is ideal for her new job as a business analyst at ATB Financial. "AU was there for me," she says, appreciative of the 'yes, we can do that' attitude that defined her relationship with the university. "It is truly humbling to have people say ... I'll go on to do great things," she says of the award. "I can't even describe how immensely flattering it is."

Wanted: Nominations for the 2011 Athabasca University Alumni Awards

To nominate an alum for a 2011 Athabasca University Alumni Award, please visit: www.athabascau.ca/alumni



Advocating for our graduate students

By Greta Kirstein, Vice-President External, Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA)



GRADSPEAK from AUGSA

The Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA) envisions a high-quality, interactive educational and social experience for our AU graduate students. As such, we do a variety of advocacy work within the university community, provincially, and federally.

As a member of the governing board for AU, one of the things we advocate for to AU decision-makers is the creation of more teaching assistant and research assistant roles for graduate students.

Provincially, we regularly discuss graduate student needs with MLAs including the Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. AUGSA is also a member of the Alberta Graduate Council, a provincial lobby organization that represents the graduate students at Alberta's four comprehensive academic and research universities.

Federally, AUGSA is a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), a federal lobby group representing over 320,000 of Canada's one million post-secondary students. CASA meets with MPs and proposes policies that aid graduate students, ensuring the federal government hears the voice of graduate students across Canada.

If you're a graduate student at AU, we need you! We need you to get involved and voice your opinions and concerns. Working together, we will create a stronger, wiser guiding force for AU graduate students. For more information, please email us: augsa@augsa.com

About AUGSA

As a student-run and student-driven organization, the AUGSA provides services for AU's 4,000 graduate students. Our services include an e-newsletter, orientation sessions, awards, in-person meet-and-greet networking events across Canada, online discussion forums and social media groups, and volunteer opportunities. Please visit us at: www.augsa.com

AU STUDENTS' UNION CORNER



Improving communication with our students, AU, government and media

By Bethany Tynes, President, Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU)

This year at the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU), we're focusing on improving communication: communication with our students, communication with other organizations, and communication with the university, government, and media.

To help improve communication with our students, we're working on a major overhaul of our website to make sure it's up to date and full of fresh, dynamic content. We're also going to continue mailing out our printed newsletter twice a year, and we're re-examining our staff positions to ensure we have enough staff to meet the needs of our growing student body.

We're also proud to announce that we've been accepted into the Alberta Students' Executive Council (ASEC). ASEC now represents students from 14 post-secondary institutions across Alberta and recognizes that each school has a unique student population. ASEC has a great track record in dealing with government and media, and AUSU is incredibly excited to work with ASEC. This new partnership will help us improve communication with external groups such as government and media.

If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our communication skills and strategies, please get in touch with our office: ausu@ausu.org

About AUSU

AUSU represents the more than 34,000 students taking AU undergraduate courses. We provide a number of services to our members including discussion forums, free handbooks and planners, assistance navigating your AU courses, and scholarships, bursaries, and awards. Visit us online: www.ausu.org

in the open

By Erin Ottosen

Reducing the cost of education with bursaries, scholarships and open educational resources.

In the last few years, Athabasca University has made progress in reducing a barrier that stops many people from going to university: the cost.

We've been working hard to create more bursary and scholarship awards for our students. As Cathy Nickel reported on page 12, there's been a 300% increase in AU student awards—from \$300,000 in 2006 to \$900,000 in 2010.

We've also taken a leadership role in something that could save a lot of money for learners in the long run: open educational resources (OERs). OERs are learning materials freely available online for everyone to use, and they can be anything from scholarly journals to textbooks to educational games. The books and journals published by our AU Press (see page 2) are all available online and downloadable at no cost. Also, in the past year, AU finished work on a collection of interactive OERs and is releasing them to the public. These OERs are multimedia resources for specific courses—for example, quizzes and crosswords embedded with audio and video (see page 4 for more information).

And finally, a huge OER success for us this year was being awarded a research chair in OERs from UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning (see page 18).

If enough universities embrace the OER movement and share their educational resources, they wouldn't have to buy as many or create them from scratch nearly as often—instead they'd be able to use and adapt OERs that already exist. And this would cut down on educational costs for universities and students alike.

OERs and awards are pieces in the much larger puzzle of how to make education more affordable and accessible for everyone. But, as Canada's Open University, you can bet we will keep tackling the financial barrier and all the other barriers that sometimes prevent people from bettering their lives through higher learning.



Making a philanthropic difference at AU

How can you help?

Public and private support is crucial to sustaining excellence in scholarship, learning resources and technology at Athabasca University, the pioneer of distance education and e-learning.

Gifts from alumni, parents, students, corporations, foundations and other friends help AU make a lasting impact. Through philanthropy, you help us in our mission to break down barriers to education, help students achieve excellence and support teaching and learning locally, nationally and internationally.

For more information or to give online, visit our website: www2.athabascau.ca/giving

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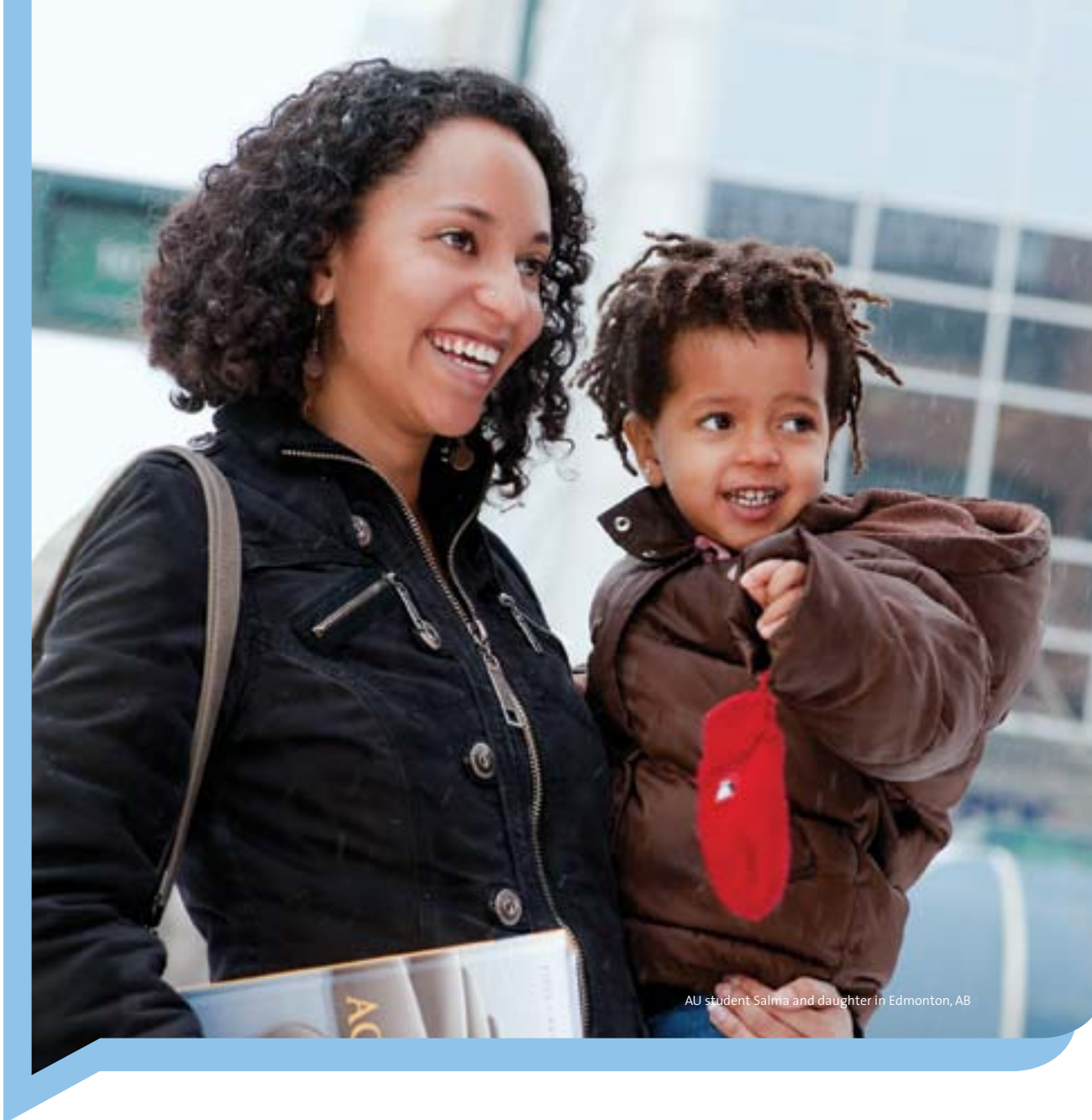
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AU student Salma and daughter in Edmonton, AB

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